



## FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES

May 14, 2024

### Missouri SuN Bucks (Summer EBT)

#### Summer Food Assistance

Missouri is currently waiting on federal approval for a new program named 'Missouri SuN Bucks' designed to help families buy food for their school-aged children this summer. Eligible families would receive a one-time \$120 benefit per qualifying child on an EBT card to buy food from authorized locations.

#### What can I do now?

To get ready for Missouri SuN Bucks you can:

- If your family gets SNAP or TA, update your address online at [mydss.mo.gov](https://mydss.mo.gov) by selecting "Report a Change"
- Subscribe to get important email alerts about the program!

 [tinyurl.com/MOSuNBucks](https://tinyurl.com/MOSuNBucks)



SCAN TO SUBSCRIBE



#### Helping Families Access Food During the Summer

Missouri is currently awaiting approval on a new program called 'Missouri SuN Bucks,' aimed at helping families buy groceries for their school-aged children during the summer.

At this time, Missouri SuN Bucks is pending approval. However, parents should start preparing for when the program launches. **The Missouri Department of Social Services is grateful to your school in partnering with us by including the above image in your emails or newsletters to parents.** This information gives a high-level overview of the program and encourages parents to subscribe for email alerts and to update their address if they have SNAP or Temporary Assistance.

Schools are a trusted place where families seek information about resources. Your support and guidance to families about Missouri SuN Bucks will help many children receive the food they need this summer. **View the complete Missouri SuN Bucks Letter to Schools here.**

### Important School Nutrition Requirements and Resources

#### **NOW AVAILABLE! Free and Reduced Price Application and Direct Certification Information and Procedures 2024-25 Handbook**

The Free and Reduced Price Application and Direct Certification Information and Procedures 2024-25 is now available on the **DESE Food and Nutrition Services** website

under **Free and Reduced Price Information** and **Handbooks**. Please refer to the **Frequently asked Questions** document pertaining to the Free and Reduced Application process. If you have any questions please call Food and Nutrition Services at 573-751-8673.

**Updates to Nutrition Standards were announced by USDA on April 24, 2024**

The New School Meal Standards will be gradually implemented to include less sugar and flexibility with menu planning. Watch this short overview **video** of the updates to the School Nutrition Standards.

The new school meal standards are outlined in the final rule titled, **Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans**.

While this new rule is effective July 1, 2024, USDA is gradually phasing in required changes over time. School Food Service Operators are not required to make any changes to their menus as a result of this rule until school year 2025-2026 at the earliest. Please carefully review the **implementation dates** for School Meal Programs.

This **Comparison Chart** provides a brief overview of proposed and final provisions included in the new school meal standards. Carefully review the full list of **new requirements**. The following meal pattern components and dietary specifications will be impacted:

- **Added Sugars**
- **Flavored Milk**
- **Whole Grains**
- **Sodium**
- **Meats/Meat Alternates at Breakfast**
- **Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Breakfast**
- **Substituting Vegetables for Grains**
- **Traditional Indigenous Foods**
- **Afterschool Snacks**
- **Beans, Peas, and Lentils at Lunch**
- **Nuts and Seeds**
- **Competitive Foods**
- **Fluid Milk Substitutes**

**Let's Talk Tuesday**

On the **Trainings** page of the DESE, FNS website you can find our past Let's Talk recordings. Linked below is the most recent recording and information regarding our next Let's Talk Tuesday.

- April 30th – **Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and Rural Non-congregate, Food Service Management (FSMC) Contracts and Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Reminders** (video starts at 05:20)
- **COMING SOON - Let's Talk Tuesday** - Learn about how to complete the school year (SY) 2024-2025 Paid Lunch Equity Tool, as well as pricing adult meals for SY24-25 and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable packet information. Once a date for this webinar is determined, an email will be sent prior to the date to each LEA's Authorized

Representative and Food Service Director on file. The email will include the link required to access the webinar.



**USDA Releases Establishing the Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs Interim Final Rule: Comment Period Open**

USDA's goal across all **summer nutrition programs** is simple: connect children with nutritious food during the summer months to help them grow and thrive. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 requires the Secretary of Agriculture to make available to States an option to provide summer meals for non-congregate meal service in rural areas with no congregate meal service.

**Feeding Missouri's Children Summer 2024**



**Seamless Summer Option (SSO)**

The Seamless Summer Option Application (SSO) is now open. If you intend to serve meals via SSO, please complete the SSO Application in the **DESE Web System**. Failure to complete this application may result in meals not being reimbursed via SSO. If you plan to operate SSO in Summer 2024, please complete the application now. If you have questions regarding the completion of your application, please reach out to your regional **Nutrition Program Specialist**.

**Local Education Agency SSO Options for Summer 2024**

1. **Seamless Summer Option (SSO)** Buildings can qualify for Seamless Summer Option via the following options:
  1. **Area Eligible** – Site was at least 50% free and reduced enrolled during the month of October 2023 (or any other month during the 23-24 SY)
  2. **Attendance Area Eligible** – Site is located within the attendance area of a site that was determined area eligible
  3. **Census Data Eligible** – Site is located in an area that is eligible or averaged eligible based on the **census map**

2. **Operate National School Lunch Program (NSLP)** where enrolled students pay for meals based on free, reduced, and paid benefits and claims will receive the NSLP reimbursement rate.

3. **Apply for Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)** provided through the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS). **SFSP vs SSO** is a good resource to determine which program will work best for your school.

Here is another resource to help you determine which program to use for summer school, provided by the USDA: **Seamless Summer and Other Options for Schools**. It breaks down each available program with guidance.

LEAs interested in operating non-congregate feeding through SSO should review the **Non-Congregate Feeding Seamless Summer Option Resource**. For additional information, see the section under the *Important School Nutrition Requirements and Resources* heading below. Please submit inquiries regarding the operation of the Non-Congregate Feeding Option in SSO to [Samantha.Taggart@dese.mo.gov](mailto:Samantha.Taggart@dese.mo.gov).

### **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**

The Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) would like to invite you to participate in an exciting and impactful program that brings nutritious meals to children during the summertime, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)! During the school year, many children receive free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch through the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs. What happens when school lets out? The SFSP was established to fill that nutrition gap and to ensure that children continue to receive nutritious meals when school is not in session. Free meals that meet Federal nutrition guidelines are provided to children 18 years old and under at approved SFSP sites.

You can find the 2024 **reimbursement rates**, **SFSP Informational Flyer**, and additional resources on the DHSS **Summer Food Service Program webpage**. Please contact [sfsp@health.mo.gov](mailto:sfsp@health.mo.gov) if you have any questions.

## **Supply Chain Assistance Funding for Schools**

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service is making funding available for supply chain assistance. This funding is in response to the on-going challenges including higher food cost. These funds assist districts with supply chain disruptions and higher food cost. The Food and Nutrition Service office has received four (4) separate allocations of supply chain funding to provide Missouri districts participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). This funding will enhance efforts to strengthen local food supply chains, and help districts to overcome financial and operational barriers while maintaining children's access to nutritious meals.

Supply Chain Assistance funds can only be used to support direct purchasing of domestically grown, unprocessed or minimally processed food products for school meals. For guidance on frequently asked questions concerning the most recent allocation of funds, please review the Updated **Supply Chain Assistance (SCA) Frequently Asked Questions** document.

If you have questions concerning the amount of SCA funds your district has received for round 1, 2 and 3 allocations, please contact our office. The amount of round 4 SCA funds

are listed in the preliminary list on the [Supply Chain Assistance LEA Lookup Tool](#).

Note: Round 4 funds have been processed, however schools that contract with a Food Service Management Company, **must complete** a **Questionnaire** concerning receiving round 4 funds and sign an attestation statement to accept and/or deny round 4 funds **no later than May 17, 2024**.

### Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) Tool

The **Paid Lunch Equity tool and guidance** for the 2024-25 School Year is now available on our website.

For SY 2024-25, School Food Authorities (SFAs) with a positive or zero balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2023, are exempt from PLE pricing requirements found at **7 CFR 210.14(e)**. **If the SFA had a positive or zero balance in the non-profit school food service account as of June 30, 2023**, you must use **this link to elect to use the PLE exemption**.

While not required, exempt SFAs may still use the PLE tool to complete the steps necessary to determine their target SY 2024-25 paid lunch price, consistent with program regulations at **7 CFR 210.14(e)**, and adjust their paid lunch prices accordingly.

SFAs that had a negative balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2023, must follow PLE requirements according to **7 CFR 210.14(e)** when establishing their paid lunch prices for SY 2024-25. SFAs may use the SY 2024-25 PLE tool to determine their required paid lunch prices.

In the PLE tool, SFAs may use the prices they last charged students as the basis for their SY 2024-25 paid lunch price calculation, even if those prices were charged during a year the SFA was not required to comply with PLE requirements. For example, SFAs that were exempt based on the FY 2023 Appropriations Act may use prices charged during SY 2023-24 to determine their PLE requirement for SY 2024-25.

If an SFA did not charge for meals during SY 2023-24, such as an SFA that operated the Community Eligibility Provision, Provisions 2 or 3, or a non-pricing option and is returning to standard counting and claiming in SY 2024-25, it may use the most recent paid lunch price data as the basis for its SY 2024-25 paid lunch calculation. If an SFA is unable to find documentation of the last paid meal price charged to students, then it must follow FNS guidance for new schools found in ***Guidance on Paid Lunch Equity and Revenue from Nonprogram Foods | Food and Nutrition Service (usda.gov)***.

Consistent with **7 CFR 210.14(e)(4)(i)**, SFAs are not required to raise their paid lunch price by more than 10 cents for SY 2024-25 from the last year they charged for paid lunches. SFAs can still choose to raise the price by more than 10 cents.

**COMING SOON - Let's Talk Tuesday** - Learn about how to complete the school year (SY) 2024-2025 [Paid Lunch Equity Tool](#), as well as [pricing adult meals for SY24-25 and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable packet information](#). Once a date for this webinar is determined, an email will be sent prior to the date to each LEA's Authorized Representative and Food Service Director on file. The email will include the link required to access the webinar.

### Reminders and Important Information

### **Summer Workshops 2024**

Summer Workshops 2024 will be held in [Springfield, MO - July 30 – August 1.](#)

*(Please note the date change - we originally published the dates as July 31 - August 2)*

- **July 30** – NEW Food Service Directors – Directors with **less** than 3 years' experience as a school food service director are invited to attend this day.
- **July 31** – ALL Food Service Directors - Directors that have **more** than 3 years' experience as a school food service director are invited to attend this day.
- **August 1** – Cooks and Kitchen Staff - Hands on skills training that incorporates knife skills, recipe basics and cooking with local and USDA Foods.

**Registration COMING SOON!**

***This is the only location for summer workshops. We will record all training sessions offered and make the recordings available.***

### **CEP Reminder**

LEAs interested in electing Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for some or all schools must prepare data on the number of identified students eligible for free meals based on Direct Certification (including Homeless, Foster, and Extended Eligible) and enrollment data as of April 1 to determine eligibility and participate in CEP.

The **Final Rule** published on September 26, 2023, which lowered the minimum identified student percentage required to elect CEP from 40% to 25%.

### **Food Service Management Company (FSMC) Final Contract Year Info**

For those in the 5th and FINAL year of their contract with their FSMC, new bids must go out very soon so that they can get approved and advertised for the mandatory 45-60 days. The contracts must be approved and signed by DESE before July 1. LEA's must use the Request for Proposal (RFP) that we provide. The RFP and the advertisement must be sent in to DESE and approved to get the process started. Please contact **Kyle Heislen** at (573) 522-9849 to get the RFP or if you have any questions. This must be completed ASAP.

## **Advocacy News**

### **Missouri School Meals Act**

Locally, Missouri has a proposed bill SB 1154 (3173.01S), **Missouri School Meals Act**. Contact your local congress representatives and educate them on why this Act matters and how it effects their local school district. Recently our Dietetic Interns from Logan University developed this **School Meals Legislation Support form**. This form may be used by Food Service Director's to help communicate and promote their school meals program with their local legislative representatives.

This act establishes the "Missouri School Meals Act". Under the act, schools shall provide a free lunch to students who qualify for reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program. Subject to appropriation, the State Board of Education shall reimburse schools for their share of the cost of providing free lunches to students who qualify for reduced-price lunch. A school shall determine which students may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program and shall provide

information and assistance to parents and guardians for purposes of filling out applications for such Program. Schools shall not publicly identify or stigmatize students who are eligible for such assistance.

This act creates the "School Meals Fund", which shall be used to reimburse schools for the costs of providing free lunches to students who qualify for reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program. The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules to implement the program, including the process by which schools may apply for reimbursement.

### **School Nutrition Association**

Another great resource to stay up to date is being a member with the School Nutrition Association (SNA) and the Missouri School Nutrition Association. These organizations help educate, lead and advocate for the health and wellbeing of the Child Nutrition Programs. SNA released its 2024 Position Paper outlining this year's legislative priorities. SNA is calling on Congress to help resolve the procurement and regulatory issues that are becoming long-term challenges for school meal programs. Congress is being urged to increase funding, preserve successful current nutrition standards and provide every student equal access to healthy school meals.

## **Farm to School**

The **Local Food for Schools (LFS) grant** is still open. The application is an easy 3 step process to apply.

1. Watch the **training video**
2. Then complete the **application survey**
3. Finally submit a **written plan** explaining how you plan to use the funds to purchase local foods for school meals



## **USDA Foods Update**

**Bonus Fresh Apples** – 110151 Various Varieties, 37-40# case, 125 servings

Don't miss taking advantage of these FREE cases of apples that will be available for September 2024 delivery! Refrigerate them and be ready for **Apple Crunch October**! No request is too big or too small for us to fill. Reach out today and request apples for your entire district at [donatedfoods@dese.mo.gov](mailto:donatedfoods@dese.mo.gov).

### **Gold Star Live Inventory End of Year Deliveries**

All Direct Delivery and FFS items have been delivered for the 2023-2024 SY!

### **Net Off Invoice Pounds**

We are now into May, which means that districts who processed Net Off Invoice should have utilized over 75% of the pounds they processed. If your district has not reached this level of use, you should have received an inquiry from your processors asking if you have a plan to utilize your remaining pounds before the end of the school year.

Districts with a plan may keep their pounds and continue to draw them down. Districts that do not respond to this email or that do not have a usage plan may have their pounds swept into the state account to take them to the 75% usage level. Please note that all pounds left unused on June 30th will be swept into the State bank.

### **DOD Updates**

Due to the generosity of several districts who returned their unused DoD Funds, we once again have bonus DoD funds that we are offering to districts. If you are interested in receiving these funds, please email [donatedfoods@dese.mo.gov](mailto:donatedfoods@dese.mo.gov).

As a reminder, districts that operate the Seamless Summer (SSO) or National School Lunch programs (NSLP) during June can continue using their DOD funds for summer school. Districts that operate a Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) are not eligible to use DOD funds for summer feeding.

To ensure a smooth transition back to school this fall, please make sure that your district's contact information is up to date in FFAVORS. If any changes need to be made, please send those to [donatedfoods@dese.mo.gov](mailto:donatedfoods@dese.mo.gov).

**Donated Foods Summer Workshop Sessions** – Our USDA Foods Team is currently planning our Summer Workshops, and we want to make sure that the sessions we offer are both relevant and interesting for our attendees. *If there are specific topics that you would like to receive training on, please let us know!* We will be sending out more information soon!

### **Past Newsletters**

Missed a past newsletter or need to access them again? You can find them all on our [Food and Nutrition Services Newsletter page!](#)



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